

# Libby hosts asbestos research conference

## National medical experts to continue discussions begun last August

A second conference on asbestos-related disease will bring national experts in pulmonology, radiology, bioethics and clinical research to Libby on Jan. 26 and 27.

Next week's gathering will be a follow-up to a similar two-day conference held last August and will include many of the same participants.

The conference will address funding to develop a clinical research center in Libby, definition of diagnostic criteria for Libby's asbestos-related disease and objectives for continued research.

Participants who attended the first

conference came away impressed with the apparent differences between the health effects of the type of asbestos found alongside vermiculite mined near Libby and the more common chrysotile asbestos used in industrial and commercial applications. Libby asbestos appears to be more toxic, and adverse impacts are believed possible from fibers previously thought too small to be a problem.

"That's something the researchers are trying to understand," said Dr. Brad Black of the Center for Asbestos-Related Disease in Libby.

The doctors who attended the August

conference are serving as advisers for the development of a research center and are helping to track down possible funding sources to pay for research, as well as ensuring the long-term viability of the CARD clinic.

Black stressed that the clinic's primary focus remains to provide treatment for victims of asbestos-related disease and that research is aimed at developing improved diagnostic tools and more effective treatments.

In addition to Black, participants in the conference will include:

**Dr. James Lockey**, director of

Occupational and Environmental Medicine Division of the University of Cincinnati. His study of workers at a Marysville, Ohio, agricultural company in the mid-1980s demonstrated adverse pulmonary effects associated with asbestos-contaminated vermiculite from Libby.

**Dr. Alan Whitehouse**, a board-certified chest physician who has maintained a private practice of pulmonary medicine in Spokane for the past 33 years. His patients include numerous Libby

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## Conference

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asbestos victims.

**Dr. Aubrey Miller**, who recently became senior medical officer and regional toxicologist for EPA Region 8. He had previously been medical director for environmental emergencies and disasters for Region 8 of the U.S. Public Health Service.

**Dr. Andrij Holian**, director of the Center for Environmental Health Sciences at the University of Montana. For the past two years, he has been involved in hereditary research into the biologic effects of Libby asbestos.

**Dr. Elizabeth Putnam**, of the University of Montana. She is currently studying the role of genetic determinants in the sensitivity of individual populations to environmental insults.

**Dr. Stephen M. Levin**, co-director for the World Trade Center Worker and Volunteer Medical Screening Program. He is associate professor at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine specializing in environmental and occupational medicine.

**Dr. Ann F. Cook** and **Dr. Helen Hoas** associate professors of psychology with the National Rural Bioethics Project at the University of Montana.

**Dr. Vikas Kapil**, medical officer with the federal Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry's Division of Health Sciences.

**Dr. Mike Spence**, director of the Montana Asbestos Screening and Surveillance Activity project based in Libby.